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Hare-Brained CIA Schemes Keep Multiplying

Remember the plot to dose up Cuban Premier Fidel Castro so his beard would fall out? The contract with Mafia hit men to knock him off? The CIA agent who plugged in a lie detector and blew out all the lights in a dingy Singapore hotel? The clandestine military operations that backfired in Cuba, Laos and Iraq?

The James Bonds responsible for those slapstick misadventures are back in business. The trick-or-treat branch of the CIA is now propounding more of those hare-brained schemes that produced such fiascos during the 1960s and 1970s.

Anyone who has noticed the unnerving glitter in the eyes of a CIA strategist or has attended a planning session of the covert crowd can only wonder what new undercover operation the CIA may be about to loose.

A few weeks ago, for example, a report appeared in print that the CIA was plotting a multiphase operation to rid the world of Libya's radical ruler, Muammar Qaddafi. Not so, the White House protested.

It was explained in another news leak that the operation was targeted

against Mauritania, not Libya. This caused understandable consternation in Mauritania. Still another leak offered further clarification: the target was Mauritius, not Mauritania. The former is an island in the Indian Ocean with a comparatively small population that can be alienated.

The truth is that the CIA plotters still have Qaddafi in their sights. If this should be denied by a White House aide, with eyes cast heavenward, let me clarify: the White House, though aware of the CIA mindset, has not approved any scheme to overthrow or liquidate the troublesome Qaddafi.

Meanwhile, back in the protected corridors of the CIA, there have been whispers about slipping an assassin into Libya to do away with Qaddafi. One scheme would have the hit man pose as a mercenary and join a ring of mercenaries in Qaddafi's employ.

The secret killer, according to one CIA scenario, would carry a deadly poison that would have a delayed effect. There would be no symptoms for the first 48 hours. Then the unfortunate Qaddafi would come down with a fever that could not be distinguished from various viral diseases. This would be followed by gradual paralysis, a coma and then death. No trace of the poison would be left in his system.

CIA sources have given my associate Ron McRae a complete description of this unpleasant potion, a common derivative that can be du-

plicated in almost any chemical lab. Journalistic responsibility forbids me, therefore, from publishing any further details.

To administer the poison, the conspirators at the CIA have considered using a tiny dart disguised as one of the black flies that infest the Libyan desert. Another possibility would be to equip the assassin with a Borgia ring, which could squirt the poison into Qaddafi's food or drink.

There is one bugaboo that troubles the more thoughtful strategists. Assassination is a game that anyone can play, and the tempestuous Qaddafi has his own killer squads that might ambush President Reagan in retaliation. The greater contribution to world stability might be a solemn pact among heads of state that they won't try to knock each other off.

Footnote: Other plots are hatching in the back rooms of the CIA, and the public should be made aware of the wildest of them. These will be reported in future columns.